
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, November 14, 2000

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.20 a.m. on Tuesday, November 14, 2000.

PRESENT

His Honour I. A. ROETT, B.A., Dip. Ed., (Speaker)

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P., (Deputy Speaker)

Hon. Sir Henry FORDE, K.A., Q.C., M.A., LL.M. (Cantab.)

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc.(Econ.), (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and Minister of the Civil Service)

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B.(Hons.) (Leader of the Opposition)

Hon. Sir Harold ST. JOHN, K.A., Q.C., LL.B.

Mr. L. R. TULL, Q.C., M.A. (Oxon.)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, Q.C., M.A., M.Sc. (Econ.)

Mr. G. W. PAYNE, LL.B.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A.(Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C (Minister of the Environment, Energy and Natural Resources)

Mr. D. CARTER (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, B.A., LL.B., (Minister of Labour, Sports and Public Sector Reform)

Hon. G. A. CLARKE, J.P, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., (Minister of Housing and Lands)

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL (Minister of Public Works and Transport)

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY, (Minister of Social Transformation)

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, LL.B., (Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development)

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, LL.B. (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture)

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc. (Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs)

Mr. D. T. GILL, B.Sc.

Hon. A. P. WOOD, J.P., B.Sc., M.Sc., M. Phil, (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)

Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B.Sc. (Minister of Industry and International Business)

Prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, November 07, 2000.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, November 07, 2000, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: If there are no corrections or observations, then let these Minutes stand confirmed.

PAPERS

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay:

1. The Judges (Remuneration and Pensions) (Conditions of Service and Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations, 2000
2. The Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries (Remuneration and Allowances) Order, 2000.
3. The Senate and House of Assembly (Remuneration and Allowances of Members) Order, 2000.
4. Excise Tax (Rate of Tax), Order, 2000.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay:

Annual Report and Statement of Accounts of the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation for the year 1999.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay:

Annual Reports of the National Assistance Board for the periods 1996-1997 and 1997-1998.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of:

1. A Resolution to approve the Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries (Remuneration and Allowances) Order, 2000;
2. A Resolution to approve the Senate and House of Assembly (Remuneration and Allowances of Members) Order, 2000;
3. A Resolution to approve the Increase of Rate of Travelling Allowance applicable to the posts of Personal Assistants to Ministers;
4. A Resolution to approve the compulsory Acquisition of parcels of land at Culloden Road, Tweedside Road, Eagle Hall, Black Rock, Westbury Road and Roebuck Street, St. Michael for road improvement.
5. A Resolution to approve the compulsory acquisition of parcels of land at Thyme Bottom, Wilcox and Fairy Valley, Christ Church for the expansion of the Grantley Adams International Airport.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that, Sir.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' NOTICES

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to amend Standing Order No. 59 of the Honourable the House of Assembly.

"WHEREAS Standing Order 59 of the Standing Orders of the Honourable the House of Assembly provides that there shall be a Committee of Public Accounts, for the examination of Accounts showing the appropriation of the sum granted by Parliament to meet the public expenditure:

AND WHEREAS by the said Standing Order the Leader of the Opposition is mandated to be Chairman of the said Committee of Public Accounts:

AND WHEREAS the said Standing Order provides that four Members shall constitute a quorum:

AND WHEREAS the work of the committee has been compromised by the inability to form a quorum:

BE IT RESOLVED that Standing Order 59 of the Honourable the House of Assembly be amended to read as follows:

"There shall be a Committee of Public Accounts, for the examination of accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted by Parliament to meet the public expenditure, and of such other accounts laid before Parliament as the Committee may think fit, to consist of not more than seven (7) Members, who shall be nominated at the Commencement of every session, and of whom two shall be a quorum."

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, since I had made the proposal during my winding up debate, if the Leader of the Opposition has no objection to the matter, but for the purposes of ensuring that the context of a lop-sided electoral results that we always have a situation where the Public Accounts Committee must function, I will be delighted if in this instance I could be allowed to second that Resolution.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move the First Reading of a Bill to amend the Post Office Act, Cap. 27A.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move the First Reading of the Bail (Amendment) Bill, 2000.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of today's Sitting.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ORDER NO. 6 – TO MOVE THE FIRST READING OF THE TENANTRIES FREEHOLD PURCHASE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2000

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the amendment before this Honourable House today is an attempt to provide a good and egalitarian society where hundreds of poor, humble people of this country can have access to land, where tenants can obtain security of tenure for land they occupy for many years and at a very affordable cost. It is also an important process to bring progress and modernisation to many urban areas which are now 'reeling' for services such as pathways, roads and lights.

Mr. Speaker, security of tenure is at the very core of this Government's housing policy. We believe that to provide a truly democratic society, landownership is essential to that process where a large number of householders, the majority of people, have the papers to their lands, their title deeds and a plot and sale.

Mr. Speaker, it is a historical fact that a major investment any Barbadian would have during his lifetime would be a chattel house or a stone house and a piece of the rock. The average Barbadian does not have investments in stocks and shares, in business or even in RSP. They do not have investments in Government bonds or financial instruments. The average Barbadian wants a piece of land.

This amendment, therefore, is about providing the opportunity for tenants in urban and other tenancies in rural Barbados to invest in a life-long dream, the dream to own a piece of the land. We have seen that the tenancies on plantations in rural Barbados have undergone tremendous change and development over the past 20 years since the Act was proclaimed in 1980. Today we see change from wood to wall, improved sewerage and indoor plumbing, recreational

facilities and industries being developed throughout rural Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, rural Barbados has changed for the better. From St. Lucy in the North to Christ Church in the South, from St. John in the East to St. James in the West, change has occurred throughout Barbados for the better. It is a fact that many Barbadians in the past before 1980, wanted to be able to pass on the house spot on which they and their children lived. They wanted to pass on these spots to their children. Many would have loved to improve their circumstances and surroundings but they could not. I am speaking about Barbados before 1980.

Many of our people have died in abject poverty because of lack of security of tenure. It is a known fact that hundreds of people every year are forced from their dwellings by landlords and ultimately have to seek shelter elsewhere. As the Honourable Member for St. George South has put it, they had to literally take the houses on their backs.

Today, there are still a few cases where landlords are held up from getting back their lands by some tenants but the cases are more where the landlords have become very unreasonable to the tenants. In many cases they have tried to frustrate the implementation of the Act. Mr. Speaker, some landlords refused to sign the Form I Notice causing severe hardships in the process and confusion in existing tenancies. 11.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, there are many cases where some landlords have refused to implement the Act. I can cite cases where landlords have not carried out the full extent of the Act, where they have tried to frustrate the Act or where they have move subtenants onto existing tenants land. I can cite cases such as Trents in St. James, Lower Estate in St. George, estates in St. John and a few in St. Philip.

Mr. Speaker, the main focus of this amendment is to provide the opportunity for hundreds of tenants still living in urban tenancies in particular and tenancies in other areas of Barbados to obtain their lots at the statutory price of \$2.50 per square foot. Government has decided that the market value would apply but that the tenant should only pay \$2.50 per square foot. The remainder of that cost will be paid by the Urban Development Commission in the case of the urban tenancies and the Ministry of Housing and Lands will administer the rural tenancies.

Mr. Speaker, it is believed that Government will spend more than \$5 million annually for the next five years on this programme. It means that tenants in Waterford, Hindsbury Road, Strakers Land, Delaware Land, Alleyne's Land, Johnson Land, Maycocks Land and all across Barbados, especially in the urban area, will benefit from this \$2.50 per square foot. It means too that we will see development in urban Barbados as we have seen development within rural Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is very significant and I want to look briefly at the historical perspective that gave rise to the parent Act. I will look at the successes and failure of the Act so far and then I will look at the amendments before this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados always had a history of plantation life, hence the plantation tenancies. Tenancies as we know them before 1980 evolved somewhere around 1838, just after slavery was abolished. Unlike other Caribbean territories the ex-slave had no way to run, he could not move from one plantation to another, he could not move to his own land like in Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad or Suriname, he had to remain on the plantation and work. This predicament was further compounded by the large number of persons who were forced to work on the plantation and, therefore, it meant working on the plantation was a prerequisite to getting a piece of land. Most of the time the land which the ex-slave had was marginal land. The ex-slave continued to provide a source of labour for the plantation and this remained in force right up to present day time. The ex-slave had no security of tenure and was subject to the removal off the land by the landlord.

Through the Master and Servant Act of 1840, which remained in force until 1937, penalties were handed out for breach of duty. For example, Mr. Speaker, tenants were evicted where they ceased being employed on a plantation. The Landlord and Tenant Act of 1897 also favoured the landlord and the landlord was able to remove the tenant at will, if he did not work on the plantation. This continuous situation of labour was important for the establishment of the day, especially because of the monoculture that we inherited.

Mr. Speaker, the Master and Servant Act and the Landlord and Tenant Act were amended subsequently in 1955, 1956 and 1969. Further legislation was enacted in 1955, with the Security of Tenure of Small Holdings Act and the Tenancies Control and Development Act of 1965 respectively. These amendments sought to provide greater security of tenure for tenants of agricultural holdings and chattel house spots by extending the period of notice to terminate employment from one month to six months. There has been improvement over the years in an attempt to provide an opportunity for labourers to remain on the estate at least up to 1965 when the Democratic Labour Party introduced and passed the Tenancies Control and Development Act of 1965.

Mr. Speaker, under that Act rents were fixed. The landlord could not increase the rent without the permission of the Magistrate's Court but tenants could not improve their home substantially. They could not move from wood to wall, they had no proper toilet facilities, they could not improve their homes as we know it today because the estate owner still owned the land. These conditions meant that problems existed on the plantation, roads were horrible and even though tenants could not be moved from the land, improvement and development could not take place.

In 1976, the new Administration of the Barbados Labour Party in its Manifesto of 1976 pledged that something would be done to improve the lot of rural Barbados.

The 1976 Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party stated:

"In regard to plantation tenancies, the agricultural worker has traditionally lived on tenantry lands of the plantation without any hope of ever acquiring the land on which he lives. Social justice demands that every tenant of a plantation tenantry be given the opportunity to purchase the house spot on which he lives."

That was the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party in 1976 and I make it a document of the House. That was a pledge in 1976, although the Opposition of the day stated at the time that it was found in their 1951 Manifesto.
11.40 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, this pledge did not materialise in 1976. It took another four years to implement a programme that the administration of the day felt was necessary to improve the lot of the tenants in this country. A committee was set up in 1977 to give rise to the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act. A number of Reports were made by that Committee. Although it came on the eve of Elections of 1981, the D.L.P. Opposition of the day accused the Government of trying to buy the Election in 1981 by bringing the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act.

In the debate, Mr. Speaker, that took place in 1980, the Prime Minister of the day, the Honourable J. M. G. M. Tom Adams, said:

"Unfortunately in Barbados, the history of land tenure is not a straightforward one."

He went on to make the point that in rural constituencies the demands of the people to build proper houses are very important. He felt that both political Parties and the workers' union in the country have fought years for the rights of sugar workers and plantation workers to a better pay. He felt, also, that problems that existed then were such that the Government had to do something to help the majority of workers in the country. In the same debate it is important to note that large contributions were made from both political sides and both sides agreed to the Bill and it was passed in 1980.

Mr. Speaker, the main provisions of that legislation in 1980, were to transfer legal title in respect of lands to the tenants; provide essential services in the tenantry – that is water, roads and electricity; to improve community facility and services – health, sanitation and education; to increase agricultural output and raise productivity. All of these things were the objectives of the Tenantry Freehold Bill which was passed in this House in September, 1980.

water, roads and electricity; to improve community facility and services – health, sanitation and education; to increase agricultural output and raise productivity. All of these things were the objectives of the Tenantry Freehold Bill which was passed in this House in September, 1980.

Mr. Speaker, we notice that in that same Bill the definition at the time, tenancies were defined as a plantation tenancy, which meant once there were more than one house on the lot, it formed a tenancy and that is the main distinction between a plantation tenancy and other tenancies. Plantation tenancies were specified in the First Schedule of the Act but it excluded land on the foreshore. Therefore, the plantation tenancy, at the time, could have been of any number of lots from one to any amount.

The other tenancies referred in the Act, urban tenancies were also covered in the Act. Other tenancies referred to the urban tenancies within the St. Michael area and we classified those as other tenancies, not plantation tenancies. That was defined as an area of land that was subdivided before or after the commencement of the Act. If the land that were for letting as sites for shallow buildings to be used as dwelling houses, whether the land was vested in the crown, statutory board or any other person, it did not include land adjoining the foreshore. That refers to tenancies within urban Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, since this original Act was passed a number of developments have taken place within urban Barbados. Today I want to make the point... Many Honourable Members were asking what has happened since the Act was proclaimed in 1980. We notice that out of 6 549 lots that were surveyed, 4 250 lots were conveyed to the tenants. It means that we still have more than 2 019 lots to be conveyed to the tenants of Barbados. It is noteworthy that in large areas like St. George, 1 329 lots were surveyed while only 1 135 lots were conveyed to the tenants. In small areas like St. Lucy, 389 lots were surveyed, 388 lots were received and 244 lots were conveyed to tenants.

Throughout Barbados we have seen an improvement of persons receiving their conveyances. We have also noticed that one of the problems that has confronted the tenancies programme is the lack of surveying services. It has caused problems in the beginning and it is still causing a serious problem today.

We have noticed that a lot of problems occurred especially in the landlocked areas like Halls Village, St. James, where a number of years have passed and we have not been able to get that tenancy properly surveyed as yet. There are also those areas, Mr. Speaker, where a number of problems still exist today; not only land lot parcels, not only parcels referring to problems of easement, and so on, but there are problems relating to what size lots were owned by the tenants.

11.50 a.m

In fact, we have noticed a number of cases where landlords would say that the tenants were paying for half an

acre when the tenants, really, were working an acre, and we have many cases like this, and this has caused severe problems.

So that the Ministry, is, at the present time, doing a number of what we call “back-tracking” to ensure that the 2 090 lots referred to that have been surveyed and, that you have a few problems. We hope that within the next year or so that we could do some improvement in that, but although a lot of them have been surveyed, you still have to get the proper plans in place.

So that, we are hoping, Mr. Speaker, that after 20 years we thought that the entire program – it was envisaged at the time that 20 years would have caused the entire program to be completed. We are still about 40 percent still to go, and we are hoping that we can fast track this as well.

Mr. Speaker, we have two areas that we have discussed with the Anglican Church. We have had meetings with the Anglican Church over the Glebe Lands. We have Glebe Land in St. George, we have Glebe Land in Christ Church, land in St. Philip, St. Thomas, lands that belong to the Church which we are looking at, at this time, to ensure that those persons who live on Glebe Land would also be entitled, and have a similar provision as those persons who live at the Glebe, St. George.

For example, under the 1980 Act, those persons living at Glebe, St. George, it was the only land belonging to the Church that had this provision.

It was scheduled in 1980 as a plantation tenancy and it was agreed, by the Church, that persons living at Glebe would get the land at 10 cents per square foot and Government would put in the necessary roads and development.

This has taken place, although I must say, Mr. Speaker, that since the Act was proclaimed, we still have a number of persons who have not, at this time, received their conveyances, and, we are hoping that this can be done over the two or three years.

Mr. Speaker, this will also help to give the other Glebes, throughout Barbados, the opportunity that those persons living on the lands of the Church an opportunity to buy the land also at \$2.50 per square foot. This is a test case and we are hoping – as I have said before, we have had a meeting with the Anglican Church and we are still to finalise the program to allow the Glebe, Christ Church and St. Philip, and wherever they exist to buy the lands at the statutory price as well.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the years, too, there have been other amendments to the Act, but, I would want to say here that one of the provisions that is important is this.

When a qualified tenant gives the landlord notice under Subsection one, it became the duty of the landlord to

Mr. Speaker, throughout the years, too, there have been other amendments to the Act, but, I would want to say here that one of the provisions that is important is this.

When a qualified tenant gives the landlord notice under Subsection 1, it became the duty of the landlord to convey the freehold of the lot to the tenant forthwith at a price to be determined, and this has caused some problem.

Once the tenant has given notice that he intends to buy the property, the landlord must convey to the tenant forthwith.

Now, this has not been the case in all the circumstances, but, generally speaking, I think that landlords, especially in rural Barbados, have cooperated quite well with Government.

But in cases where the tenant has given his option to purchase and the landlord does not submit the Form 1 Notice, then the tenant also has other recourse; the tenant can submit the notice in a Form 2 case.

In this situation, Mr. Speaker, Form two case would be for those tenants who could not or cannot find the landlord, where the tenant does not know the whereabouts of the landlord, or where the landlord has bluntly refused. In cases like this, Mr. Speaker, then the Form 2 Notice will be deposited with the Registrar of the Supreme Court. That was the original Act. It has changed over time and today the Registrar of Titles is the person who will now give the tenants a good title.

What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is this, that even though it is the responsibility of the landlord to sign the Form 2, if he can be found, the tenant must not be disadvantaged. I think the Act was quite clear that the tenant must not be disadvantaged and that, in this case, that he cannot be found.

I believe, in fact, Mr. Speaker, in urban Barbados, there are many cases like that where the landlord has bluntly refused to sign the Form 1 Notice, and the tenant cannot get the land that he has been living on for so many years.

Now, if this happens, the tenant would have to submit what is called a Form 2 Notice and, in this case, he still obtains his title through the Registrar of Titles and that is important.

In other cases of settling disputes, we have many cases where the price – now, the price was set in rural Barbados, so that a person buying land at Pools, St. John, or Lower Estate, St. George, or Checker Hall, St. Lucy, will buy theirs at 10 cents, because the price was scheduled.

In urban Barbados, let us say Alleyne's Land, or any of the tenancies in Bank Hall, the land price was not set, even though the size of the tenancy was set.

In case of the original Act, it was to be two, in case of the Amendment it was more than five.
12.00 p.m.

Sir, in urban Barbados the Small Holdings Committee was established in the 1960s but here again, it was brought to the fore in the 1980 Act as an arbitrator to settling disputes. Each Small Holdings Committee comprises the Magistrate of the jurisdiction and two or three other members and is selected by the Minister of Agriculture.

I am told that the Small Holdings Committees in many of the jurisdictions, need to be reactivated. I am told too, Mr. Speaker, that only one or two of these Small Holdings Committees usually meet and we would want to encourage all those committees to meet because there are still a number of cases that are outstanding. For example, as I said before, the determination of price.

Mr. Speaker, even in the new amendment, persons wanting to determine the price of the land, for example, in Alleyne's Land, let us suppose the landlord says that he wants \$8.00 per square foot for his land and the tenant says, No, I think it is only valued at \$5.00, a committee has to be set up to arbitrate what is the correct price. The Small Holdings Committee would be the committee to do just that and I would encourage them to meet regularly. In fact, I am told that in many cases the Small Holdings Committee is the one that has caused severe hardship and it has worked as a deterrent to obtaining the titles for the various persons who are entitled to them.

Mr. Speaker, I would also want to make the point that over the years, the other major amendment that took place was in 1990 and I want to spend a few minutes to look at the amendment of 1990.

Mr. Speaker, there was also another amendment before that in 1981 but that was more of an administrative arrangement where the fees for lawyers were fixed at a minimum of \$10. The Property Transfer Tax was exempted in the case of the transfer of land from the landlord to the tenant. Sir, that is the 1981 amendment and as I said before, the professional fees were fixed for the lawyers. Under the amendment also, it was not necessary for The Chief Town Planner to approve the lots in the tenancies as in other developments but the 1990 amendment brought wide-ranged changes.

It was felt by the Democratic Labour Party at the time that it was necessary to correct certain perceived disabilities that were considered, according to them, to be repugnant to the spirit of the Constitution which affected the fundamental

rights of individuals. Although I understand there were many objections to the Bill, it was passed in Parliament in 1990. The main amendment was that:

Tenants who were residing on non-plantation tenancies of five lots or less, were excluded from the application of the amended Act.

This meant that many persons lost their rights to purchase their lots under this amendment. Under the new amendment of the Democratic Labour Party administration, five or less lots did not then constitute, and still do not constitute a tenancy and a number of people were thrown out. There had to be more than five lots to constitute the tenancy. Five or less meant that the tenants would have to find a new arrangement.

Under that amendment, the Government also guaranteed that land would be provided for those persons who had lost their rights. I think the only land that was bought by the Democratic Labour Party was a site at Haggatt Hall in St. Michael of 90 lots for the re-siting of those persons who had lost their right to purchase.

Mr. Speaker, under that amendment also, the Government would provide a lot for those people who had lost their right to purchase and they would purchase at the same price as if they were on their original spots at the time.

Mr. Speaker, we also noticed that amendment to the Act gave those persons who had resided on the plantation for 20 years or more by 1990, the right to remain on the land and that is what we would want to focus on at this time.

Those persons who were living on the land for a duration of 20 years up to 1990, had the right to remain on the land but they did not have the right to purchase the land. It could have been one householder or two householders. Once the householder had been on land for 20 years or more, then the tenant had the right to remain on that land.

The amendment that will come before this House today, will seek to provide the opportunity for those persons who could not be removed but could not buy the land, we would seek today to give those persons who were on that land the right to purchase their land.

I think some Honourable Members were asking about that provision and I feel it is good because in most cases, these persons who were on the land up to 1970, would have done substantial improvements to their properties, that is, some of them would have built on toilet and bath, some of them would have built substantial masonry parts to their homes and so on and so forth. Sir, this amendment today would also seek to help these tenants who were on the land for 20 years.

It is also important to note, Mr. Speaker, as we have said before, all of those persons who were removed from the tenancies – who we say were disenfranchised – we are not seeking to bring them back at this time. There are many cases that imposed hardships on the individuals, for example, on the person who lived on a single lot and who would not have lived there for 20 years. There are a number of cases where there are problems and we are hoping in the future to look at those single lot situations.

There are many people too, Mr. Speaker, who have been renting for years and are asking us for house spots. We are hoping that we would be able to do something for them. 12.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to look at the proposed amendments that are before this House today. Since 1996, the Ministry of Housing and Lands have been looking at how we could improve the situation, eliminate the difficulties and present a better programme for the disenfranchised tenants, to help the landlords who in some cases were disadvantaged and to help the tenants, that is what the original Act was intended to do.

Mr. Speaker, it is, therefore, Government's intention to provide the solution and to provide the greatest challenge for persons to own their homes. Therefore, it is important for us to look at these new amendments in light of the fact that we want to be able to provide a land owning democracy.

Mr. Speaker, some of those tenants within urban Barbados would be cultivating or maybe occupying 3 000 to 5 000 square feet of land on an average. In some cases we have been told that some people may cultivate, in very few cases, more than 5 000 square feet. In this amendment, Mr. Speaker, the Government will be putting a ceiling on the amount of land the Government will be subsidising. Therefore, Government will subsidize the first 5 000 square feet of land at \$2.50 per square foot but if the tenant is cultivating or occupying more than the 5 000 square feet, then the tenant will have to pay the difference.

As I said before, in more than 90 per cent of the cases, tenants, especially in urban Barbados now occupy 2 000 to 3 000 square feet of land on an average. This is in keeping with Government's policy because Government is now providing lots of 3 000 to 4 000 square feet in size, so it is keeping within the Government's programmes.

Mr. Speaker, we, in the Ministry of Housing and Lands have also been concerned that many tenants declare their intention to purchase their lots through the submission of the Form 1 Notice but then they do not pursue the sale. There are many cases where the landlord was given notice, where some tenants will say they want to buy the lot by submitting the Form 1 or Form 2 Notices but when the lots have been

surveyed and the legal work has been completed, there are many cases where the tenants then say that they are not ready or you cannot find the tenant. They refused to purchase.

Mr. Speaker, in the new amendment we are asking this House to approve this section which states that once the landlord has completed his work and all the legal work has been completed, then the tenant should buy. If it takes four or five years to complete, if the survey work takes time, if the parcel is landlocked and if there are difficulties, all of this work has to be done first.

We need to explain this very carefully because I know that many Honourable Members were asking about this particular amendment but where the tenant has submitted the Form 1 or 2 Notices and the landlord has completed all of the work then the tenant has five years in the first instance to buy once the work has been completed.

Mr. Speaker, this is essential because we realize that this will help both the landlord and the tenant. In a number of cases, the tenant sometimes dies and leaves no Will and sometimes he has not completed the sale and this causes problems for his children or persons who would have worked or lived within the keep of the tenant.

Mr. Speaker, there are many cases like this and we are asking persons who complete the Form 2 Notices to complete the sale within a period of five years. Mr. Speaker, that is necessary and is in keeping within the problems that we have experienced and we want to be able to eliminate those problems at this time.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, the landlord, under this section within the Act, must convey to the tenant the lot forthwith and that is important for the Act. However, we want to also protect him at this time by allowing the tenant to complete the sale within a period of five years.

After this Act is passed, persons who become tenants in the future will have a further three years to complete the sale. Mr. Speaker, persons from time to time become tenants especially in urban Barbados where sometimes landlords will put two or three houses on the lots. When new tenancies are formulated and persons have submitted their Form 2 Notice to the landlord, he now has a further 3 years in order to complete the sale.

One of the difficulties within ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Is this in addition to the five years?

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: No. Those persons who are now tenants at the coming of the Act, when the amendment is passed today or whenever it is passed, who have already submitted their Form 2 Notice will have five years to complete the sale as soon as the landlord has completed all obligations.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Five years, we have amended that to say five years.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Yes, five years will be for those existing tenants who have already submitted the Form 2 Notice or the Form 1 Notice. Once the landlord has shown that he has completed it in writing – he has to put it in writing – then the tenants have to complete the purchase in a five-year period.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Once the landlord has put in writing that he has completed all obligations and he is ready to convey, then the tenant has an obligation to purchase under a five-year period.
12.20 p.m.

Now if he does not purchase in 5 years, then he is saying that he wants to remain a tenant. There are many cases where tenants would prefer to remain as tenants and not to purchase. It is their option to do so. If the tenant so desires to remain a tenant, then he is free to remain as a tenant but he will lose that right under this amendment. He would now revert to his position as a tenant and he would continue to pay the rent as he paid before. However, if he has done any substantial improvement to his property, then the landlord would have a right to approach the Magistrate Court to ask for an increase in the rent.

Now I want to be clear on this one, Mr. Speaker. As I have said before, there are a number of cases where persons would want to remain as tenants. We have cases in my constituency where many tenants would have built substantial stone houses and would have improved their dwelling. The landlord is willing to convey but a number of persons will say that I do not want to buy because I do not want to pay taxes or I do not want to pass on the land to my children. There are cases like this, Mr. Speaker, where tenants do not want to pass on the land to their children because their children were not good to them. Some landlords will say that my children have gone abroad and they have never sent anything back to me. I am not going to pass on the land to my children and, therefore, he will not complete the Form 2 Notice. He prefers to remain as a tenant.

Sir, we have cases where the child comes back from overseas after 20 years to say after the father has died that I want the land. The land really belongs to me. This is causing difficulty and we want to explain that the child does not qualify for the land. However, it was explained to me recently that there are some cases where the attorney will still convey the land to the child. If it happens like this, the

Ministry does not get into a situation where we will prevent the child from getting the land. There are cases which cause much difficulty in this area. So that those persons who do not buy would have opted to remain as tenants and they will be referred to as tenants. Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Magistrates Court will look at increased rent for those landlords who have put in substantial improvements.

There are many cases where the landlord would have improved the tenantry and put in roads. Of course, Mr. Speaker, as we know in many cases in Barbados most of the development that has taken place within the constituencies in St. Michael has been done by Government. Again, we have to look at that and we have to take into consideration the developments that have taken place over the last 20 years that have been put in by Government. We realize that in many cases the landlords would want to ask for substantial sums of money per square foot of \$8.00 because it is now developed land. The Small Holdings Committee will take the developments which have been put in by Government into consideration so that the price will remain at the price before the developments would have taken place. That is important, Mr. Speaker, because I have had cases where Members of Parliament will come and say that a piece of land is being sold in my area for \$7.00 but Government has put in the infrastructure, sewerage and all the necessary things for land to be developed and yet the landlord wants to charge market value. Sir, that has to be looked at and the Small Holdings Committee is mandated to take that into consideration to protect not only the tenant but also to protect Government as well.

Mr. Speaker, we want also to look at other amendments and, of course, we have talked about the limitation of the size already. That is only 5 000 and we have explained this already. Government will subsidize 5 000 square feet of land. The remaining will be paid for by the tenant. For example, there are a few people who have 8 000 square feet. Government will subsidize 5 000 and the 3 000 will be market value for the tenant.

Other amendments, Mr. Speaker, deal with the power of the Registrar of Titles. We have had cases where the Registrar of Titles could not convey the property because of some disputes and cases of hardship. I understand that there are cases where the tenants would have accumulated a lot of arrears. I think that in the Waterford area we had cases where some tenants had accumulated a lot of arrears not because they were not willing to pay, but because they could not find the landlord.

There are a number of cases within urban Barbados where you live on land for "donkey" years but you cannot find the landlord. When it happens like this and the rent accumulates, it poses a difficulty for the Registrar of Titles to convey the property to the tenant. We are now empowering the Registrar of Titles under the new amendment to provide a good title for the tenant by using

either Form 1 or Form 2. The role of the Registrar of Titles is now strengthened to allow this officer to convey to the tenant the property. It is important to do so to protect the tenant. We envisage that this would speed up the process for those cases in Halls Village and those many cases that we have in the St. Michael area. As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, so far more than 200 lots since the Bill was passed that the Registrar of Titles had to intervene. I think there were over 240 cases that the Registrar of Titles had to intervene to provide the title for persons, but intervention does not mean full conveyancing. Even though the Registrar may have intervened to help protect the tenant, he still has problems in conveying to the tenant. We are envisioning that as from the amendment the Registrar would be empowered to provide a good title to the tenants.

12.30 p.m.

Minor amendments are also taking place in the Third and Fourth Schedules of the Bill. It is merely of a sequencing nature that we have re-ordered the Third and Fourth Schedules to the Bill. It is also important that we are looking at the conveyance as well and the conveyance which is being prepared would now bear the title: A Conveyance made Pursuant to Section 16 of the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act. In the past, this title was not given. The amendment will now read:

"A CONVEYANCE MADE PURSUANT TO
SECTION 16 OF THE TENANCIES
FREEHOLD PURCHASE ACT,
CAP. 239B."

Mr. Speaker, these amendments before this House are a means of protecting the tenants as well as challenging the landlords. It is egalitarian and good governance when we provide the opportunity for both landlords and tenants to be happy within a given situation. We believe that with these amendments the landlords will be able to sell the land at the market value.

I do not know of any case within urban Barbados that the landlord did not want to sell the land. The landlord knows that if there are five or less lots on the land then he can terminate the contract. Once there are more, he is happy to sell. This amendment we envisage will help the tenant and the landlord to secure on one hand the tenure for the tenant and on the other hand will help the landlord to receive his land at a correct value. It would provide a sort of equitable situation within Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, it is envisaged that within urban Barbados there are some 3 000 tenants that will benefit from this amendment. Already the Urban Development Commission has gone ahead and has surveyed a number of areas within the urban corridor. I understand that a pilot project which was started two or three years ago in Alleyne's Land has been surveyed and already a number of persons have

received their titles to their land. We are hoping that within the next year or two that more people within urban Barbados can receive title. In fact, you will recall that the Prime Minister in his 1999 Budget speech committed Government at the time to the \$2.50 a square foot for those persons living in urban tenancies.

This Bill today will extend it to other tenancies in St. Michael, in Christ Church and in rural Barbados. We envisage that 3 000 households will benefit in urban Barbados and another 2 500 in rural tenancies. This will help areas in Bournes Village, for example, the people at Silver Sands, at Gemswick, the people who live on other tenancies that are non-plantation will benefit from this amendment.

I am hoping too that the Church would come into this programme where those persons would benefit. It is important to note that approximately 12 000 households across the island would have been entitled to purchase their lots at a statutory price of either 10 cents per square foot or \$2.50 per square foot. I want to repeat that. When this amendment is completed the 6 000 that we talk about that have benefited in rural plantation tenancies, when we add to what will happen in urban Barbados, 12 000 households or 15 per cent of all the households in Barbados would benefit from this amendment. That is important.

We want to make the point too that coming out of the tenancies we know that persons live within the developments, within the heights, within the various developed areas of Barbados, but they also have connections and their roots are within the tenancy system. It is my estimation that more people would benefit than those for whom we have collected statistics. People in droves will benefit from this amendment.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that it is important to note the benefits of this amendment. A number of tenancies have received substantial improvement over the years, including better roads and drainage, provision of water and electricity service and surveying services and this has contributed to the improved quality of the housing stock throughout Barbados.

Many communities are now unrecognisable when you compare them to their 1980 condition. We now have a better situation. When people come back here from overseas, especially when they go to the tenancies, they say that we now have better conditions.

Within urban Barbados we have a number of problems. I have gone to Waterford, to Snagg Land, to areas that are 'reeling' now for assistance. We envision that with these new conditions, people will be able to upgrade themselves, that they will be able to qualify for small mortgages. When people own their lands they can qualify for a mortgage either at the BMFC or the National Housing Corporation. This will

help. People will be able to use the title as collateral and this would help persons to upgrade their homes and their condition.

It is also in keeping with Government's commitment to provide lands for persons throughout Barbados. It is in keeping with Government's intention to provide a stable democracy. Mr. Speaker, if there is one investment that a Barbadian will have in his lifetime, it would be a piece of land. We are providing today, the opportunity for Barbadians to own a piece of this rock. It is indeed important for us to look at how we can better our situation and how we can improve the conditions under which we live.

12.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to recognise that once we have a landed democracy that it will help individuals and households to think better of themselves. We have proven within rural Barbados that when people improve their homes they feel better because they want to go home. Many people tell me that they do not want to go home. It is not that they do not want to go home, it is because of the conditions that exist at some homes where they cannot improve their homes.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Some people say that at their homes the flooring is rotted, that they can push their hands through the side boards and that the 'galvanises' are leaking. The conditions are bad and this is only because they are renting.

I have gone into certain areas where garbage is piled up, where there are no pathways to the houses and this is because persons do not own the houses. It is shown that when people own their properties that they care for them better. This is why within the National Housing Corporation we are seeking to ensure that more people own their homes. In the fullness of time that we give persons the opportunity to buy those units now rented by hundreds of people throughout Barbados. A committee has been set up to provide the opportunity for those persons who have been renting for all those years to own the homes that they have been renting.

We will soon come back to the House to look at those persons living in conditions that are not desirable, especially those tenants with single units. We will ask Cabinet to do something to improve those persons with single units. There are over 300 persons within urban Barbados who do not now qualify under the Act. Those persons living in single lot units do not qualify under the Act and we are hoping that we could do something for those people living in single units who do not now qualify under the Act.

Mr. Speaker, this is a ten-year programme and once we have done the things necessary under the Act, this will

provide for a better Barbados. We believe too, Mr. Speaker, that the landscape of Barbados will be changed and this will provide for positive attitudes, new ideas in housing and new scope within the housing sector. It will provide not only opportunities for householders but it will provide opportunities for those persons who work within the housing sector. This will be a change in the right direction, it will be a change for the better and it will be a change to make Barbados the most beautiful country within the hemisphere. It is our intention to look at how we can make Barbados not only beautiful but make Barbados into a place where people would want to invest in houses and land.

Mr. Speaker, with those remarks I beg that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: I beg to second that and reserve my right to speak.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, at this point I beg that further consideration of this Bill be postponed.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that.

ORDER NO. 8 – THE LAND TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2000

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, the amendment before this Chamber seeks to make provision for an amendment to the Land Tax Act, Cap. 78A of the Laws of Barbados to give the power to garnish to the Commissioner of Land Tax so that the Commissioner's powers are broadened and deepened in his effort to be able to collect arrears that have become due and owing to the Land Tax Department.

This Chamber has been informed over a number of years, particularly within the last decade, of the seemingly intractable problem that faces the Commissioner of Land Tax, his department and their capacity to be able to collect land taxes that have become due and owing to that department.

Indeed, Sir, it is significant that in the last decade there have been two amnesties granted to land taxpayers in this country. In 1992 the then Minister of Finance granted an amnesty for eight months in order to be able to collect the substantial arrears that were due and owing at that time and yet again in 1998, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, in his capacity as Minister of Finance, in his Budget Speech of September, 1998 announced an amnesty that would run from September 3, 1998, to September 2, 1999, in an effort to collect the substantial arrears owed to the Land Tax Department.

On that occasion, Sir, it was announced, as on the previous occasion in 1992, that Government would be waiving all penalties and interest if persons were in a position to comply with the clearance of their arrears to the Land Tax Department. On the same occasion in September, 1998, the Ministry of Finance wrote off all land taxes due and owing between 1972 and 1981 in an effort to ensure that there was no uncertainty as to what had been due and owing in that period of time. The amount written off then was the equivalent of some \$5.3 million.

As a result of the amnesty a sum of \$15.5 million was collected between the period of April to September, 1999 and persons made some use of the amnesty which was granted between 1998 and 1999. However, a substantial sum of money still remains due and owing to the Land Tax Department. On September 30, 2000, the amount that was due and owing is \$82 million, \$55 million in taxes and \$27 million in penalties and interest.

Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner of Land Tax has also spoken at length, to the Barbadian public, of his intention to take action to be able to further recover monies due and owing to the Land Tax Department. Indeed, we have been forced to do a number of things over the course of time. These things were: reminders to people that they owe, arrear notices and they have given taxpayers a time by which the debt should be settled. They have also, with the accompanying statements, set out the amount of arrears due and owing, which of course was not previously done. Indeed, Sir, they have now, within the last year, the Commissioner of Land Tax has sought to utilise Section 34 of the Land Tax Act powers which gives him the power to sell.
12.50 p.m.

I am instructed, Sir, that notices have been served, so far, on 35,000 accounts that have been delinquent. These 35,000 accounts are out of a total tax roll of 95,000 accounts, therefore showing that more than one-third of the accounts on the Land Tax Register are in arrears, to be precise 37%, Sir.

This clearly is an untenable situation because every year the Government comes here and on the basis of the laws of the lands, lays out Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue that it reasonably expects to govern with. If the level of non-compliance with the laws of the land that are empowering persons to raise taxes is so high then it hinders one's capacity to be able to govern effectively and, certainly, at the tax rates that you have settled upon.

We, therefore, as a Government have tried to take every reasonable action in these circumstances. It is also a fact that of those 35 000 accounts that are delinquent only 2,793 of them have balances over \$5,000. I want to repeat that, Mr. Speaker, only 2,793 of the accounts have balances over \$5,000. In the majority of instances the monies owed to the Land Tax Department are \$5,000 and less.

Equally, the Commissioner of Land Tax, given that statement of affairs, has to date, within the last few months, having served final notices of intended sale of property and failing the satisfactory arrangements for the settlement of those debts, 24 properties have been advertised by the Commissioner of Land Tax for sale. Five were sold between September 12 and October 25, 2000. Those five were sold because of a total lack of positive response from the owners of the land, having given it every possible opportunity. The remaining 19 that had been advertised for sale have either settled the debt in full or they have entered into agreement with the Land Tax Department to settle the debt under equally acceptable terms and conditions.

May I say, Mr. Speaker, that for any government to sell anyone's land it must always be a power of last resort and that is, perhaps, the reason why over the last 15 or 20 years successive Governments have had to deal with the problem of arrears building and building, because no one likes to sell out the property of anyone in satisfaction, even in a debt, particularly a government because it may be seen as preventing a person from continuing to build on his wealth.

Equally, it is not fair to those persons who do pay their taxes to have a situation where other persons continue not to pay for very long periods of time and the take from the taxes is therefore compromised and requires one to have another look as to whether the tax effort is meeting the demands that have been set.

Sir, seeking to sell land under the powers of Section 34 of that Act, is a very lengthy, complex and complicated process which requires a tremendous amount of caution on the part of all those involved. Indeed, Sir, the process – if I may reflect that process for the benefit of the House, – requires a number of steps as follows:

5. There must be the preparation of the details and description of the property for advertisement in the newspapers and in the *Official Gazette*.
6. This description must be an accurate description because you can well imagine if it is not accurate, you will be affecting the rights of someone who has or may have complied with the requirements to pay their land taxes. There are very particular time constraints and time demands set out in the legislation which have to be observed, and failure to observe them may result in the nullification of the process.
7. There must then be the preparation of the warrant and the instruction given to the Auctioneer. Sir, Government has found recently that it has had to look at the fact that there has been an absence of a number of auctioneers capable of doing this type of work.
4. The actual auction has to take place and there must

be an attempt to verify whether last minute payments have been made or not. If last minutes payments come in, even after the auction has been completed, Sir, it can result in the cancellation of the sale.

I do not believe that most people are aware of this because at that point, even when the auction has been completed, no money is passed yet, but a person has agreed to buy at "X" amount. If the owner of the land comes and settles the debt then the result of the auction can be set aside in favour of the substantial owner of the land. The Commission of Land Tax always has to be careful to make sure that late payments do not come when actually proceeding with the auction.

Equally, Mr. Speaker, in the case of the sale of lands and buildings. Efforts have to be made to secure those buildings for a period between the date of the auction and the date of the conveyance to the purchaser because the liability as to the ownership and occupation of the building would then have shifted to the Commissioner of Land Tax as well as to the new purchaser. Whereas, the property that is sold is tenanted, Mr. Speaker, there is even more problems because one then has to resolve the rights of the tenants with the rights of the new purchaser and in those circumstances the process of selling land that may be tenanted becomes even more complexed than if you were just dealing with an ordinary piece of land. Then, of course, the property must be conveyed to the new purchaser within a specific time, and equally, there must be a decision as to the lodging into the High Court of any funds in excess of what is due and owing to the Commissioner of Land Tax.

1.00 p.m.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have gone through that process for the benefit of this House because it is important that persons understand that the power to sell land, while clearly stated in section 34 of the Land Tax Act, is a highly complexed procedure, and one that requires the utmost care and one in which there is, in fact, still a relationship between the Commissioner of Land Tax and the person who has failed to pay the taxes.

In those circumstances, it might be better understood why successive governments have allowed such a large amount of money to constitute the arrears of the land taxes.

It is significant, Mr. Speaker, that we can go as far back to 1981/82 to arrears that are still owing reaching t h e \$1 million mark on or about 1990.

So, this is not a four or five-year period, this is 20 years of arrears that constitute the \$82 million that is due and owing to the Land Tax Department.

In those circumstances, Sir, it was felt by the Land Tax Department that there should be a standardisation of procedures bringing the Land Tax Department on par with other revenue collection agencies and indeed, Sir, with the private citizen, because the National Insurance agency has the power under Section 43(a) of the National Insurance Act to garnish monies that are owed by a third party to the person who is in default so that the debt that is owing to the National Insurance can be satisfied.

Equally, Sir, in 1998, under the Customs Amendment Act this Parliament gave a similar power to the Comptroller of Customs allowing the Comptroller of Customs the power to garnish for money due and owing.

Indeed, Sir, those who are familiar with the Law would be well aware that private citizens, having had a judgment rendered in favour of them, have the power under the Rules of the Supreme Court to apply *ex parte* to a Judge in Chamber for the power to garnish a third party.

This is nothing unusual, and indeed, Sir, it is available in almost all Commonwealth jurisdictions where there is a power to garnish monies owed under the Land Tax.

It is of significance, Mr. Speaker, we believe this power to garnish will give the Commissioner of Land Tax an opportunity to be able to bring to a closure far more debts, particularly where the monies that are due and owing are from another government agency. There can be a set-off in respect of the monies that are owed to Land Tax, rather than having to wait for someone to decide to pay it to you.

It will give him greater powers also where contractors or consultants do work for various government agencies or major firms in town.

It will also give him power where persons are known to be employed and are receiving certain wages. It is significant to point out that this amendment is subject to the Protection of Wages Act, Cap. 351, and therefore, will not alter a man's capacity to continue living because his right to a percentage of his wages is guaranteed under the Protection of Wages Act. Even though the Commissioner of Land Tax has the power to be able to get some of his salary, it cannot be at the expense of his capacity to live. I think that important point needs to be made so that citizens be not fearful of the fact that their whole salary can now be garnished away because they owed money.

This Act does not give that power to the Commissioner of Land Tax. It will, perhaps, be useful Sir, that I also state that persons who have a difficulty with the valuation that had been prescribed by the Commissioner of Land Tax has a right under Section 18 and 19 of the Land Tax Act to appeal to the Land Tax Relief Board – and I think a lot of Barbadians are not necessarily aware of this fact.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Section 18 of The Land Tax Relief sets it out. It is right here. It gives you the power to appeal to that Board. If you are not satisfied with the decision of the Land Tax Relief Board you then have a right of appeal to the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I can just quickly take you through the Legislation itself.

Clause 2 of the Bill gives the Commissioner of Land Tax the power to be able to garnish, and it is the language that –

“Where the Commissioner of Land Tax knows or suspects that a person is entitled or due to receive a payment from another person who is referred to as a third party, that the Commissioner of Land Tax may deliver to that third party a notice of the amount of tax payable by that person and a demand for that payment to be made to the Land Tax Department.”

The demand, Sir, has to be very clear, and clause 2.2 sets out the form in which the demand must take place, so that you cannot just arbitrarily exercise that right.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the name of the person who is indebted to the Commissioner of Land Tax and the amount of debt due and owing must be prescribed. The demand notice will require of the third party to make the payment forthwith if the payment is due and owing at the time. If it is not, then to make it as soon as it becomes due and owing.

Sir, where the Commissioner of Land Tax delivers a demand for payment to a third party that third party shall pay to the Commissioner monies otherwise payable by the third party to the person who owes the money. It does not matter whether the source of that money is interest, annuities, dividends, salaries, or wages. With the exception I referred to earlier this amended Bill is subject to that section of the Wages Act and therefore, you cannot deduct all of a man's wages just to satisfy the payment of the debt.

It is significant, too, Mr. Speaker, that where that third party fails to comply with the demand the third party is guilty of an offence, and is, in fact, liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$1000 or a period of imprisonment of six months.

This is also consistent with all other powers of garnishing; that the third party has to comply with the notice if not there is a penalty that attaches itself to it.

May I say, Sir, that there is one other power given under this piece of Legislation which is of significance, and slightly wider than the power of garnishing, and that is –

“Where the Commissioner of Land Tax suspects that someone who is liable to pay tax is about to leave the country, or he has reason to believe that there are other circumstances which required the protection of the revenue, he may then bring forward and cause a person to pay tax, even before the date that he would otherwise have been due to pay the tax.”

In other words, he may issue a notice of immediate payment, because he has reason to believe that the person may flee the country.
1.10 p.m.

The overriding concern though is that persons who owe Government money should pay it because at the end of the day all of us will benefit from the social services and other services that Government has to provide in this country and we should see it as a necessity to meet those obligations except in difficult circumstances and in genuinely difficult circumstances. In such a case, every facility should be made to ensure that persons are given time to clear their obligations and where the person is owed money by Government, then certainly this method of collecting is a desirable method to use.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now suspended until 2.15 p.m. today.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 2.15 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.
1.12 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, in winding up the Bill, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his observations. I think that there can be no disagreement on the fact that additional resources have to be provided to ensure that the management of information within the Land Tax Department reaches standards that will allow it to act properly. That information and indeed the writing off of the debts between 1972 and 1981 was an indication that that information may not have been the strongest information on which to proceed.

Equally, Sir, there is also no disagreement with the fact that there needs to be a greater level of customer friendliness in respect of all Government Departments. I believe that the Prime Minister has already set the tone for that by requiring

two things to happen:

1. That there be a general citizens charter of rights in relation to citizens accessing any services from any Government Department.

The Land Tax Department will obviously have to be one.

2. The Prime Minister's commitment for the introduction of e-government in the context of the Government's strategic move towards e-commerce.

He spoke at length to this in his Budget reply.

The comments of the Leader of the Opposition gels well with the intentions of this Government and, in fact, the work of this Government in those divisions and we hope therefore that we could continue to see it.

On his point about persons interacting with the public sector being likely to be the ones who would be most affected by giving the Commissioner of Land Tax the power to garnish, there is no doubt that obviously Government is better able to share information among itself and that the Commissioner of Land Tax will have more ready access to information from other Government departments than from between two private transactions.

Having said that, there is a large volume of Government transactions which should help to substantially decrease the amount of money owing in arrears if the power to garnish is used. Equally, there are still some private transactions which will come to the attention of Government and to the Commissioner of Land Tax which will allow this to be able to be used.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his comments and say to him that this amendment is intended to widen and deepen the powers of the Commissioner of Land Tax without having to resort to the power of sale which we believe as a Government should be the last option in respect of the recovery of debts and arrears.

With those few words, Sir, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that.

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 – 3, inclusive, were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Land Tax (Amendment) Act, 2000.

2.30 p.m.

ORDER NO. 10 – TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A
RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE VESTING
IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION
OF LAND AT HOYTES
VILLAGE, ST. JAMES

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: The Resolution before this House seeks permission to vest approximately 18 237 square metres of land, representing nine parcels of land at Hoytes Village, St. James in the National Housing Corporation for the purpose of housing development.

The land that we are vesting in the National Housing Corporation was acquired by Government in 1997 and was acquired after we carried out studies in the area and it was determined that these lands were landlocked. The National Housing Corporation already has a development going on. In fact, we have provided more than 30 houses in the area and have built on lots that were created sometime after 1994 and sold.

There is a housing development already existing within Hoytes Village area and it comprises two-bedroom and three-bedroom homes. These homes were built through a joint venture programme between the private sector and the National Housing Corporation. There is also a thriving village at Hoytes Village. It is suitable for housing. In fact, the Town Planner has agreed with the proposal to acquire the land and to vest it in the National Housing Corporation so that housing can be established within that area.

Already, Mr. Speaker, plans are almost completed to begin the construction of houses within the Hoytes Village area. The demand for these houses is indeed very great. We are hoping that this could be a model community since it has a recreational facility. It is near to a church, near to the existing village of Thorpes and it is east of the Haynesville area.

[Mr. Speaker left the Chair.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was saying to the Speaker that the development at Hoytes Village is one that we will look very carefully at. We want to make it a model community

where there are houses as well as community services, recreational facilities and a church. We believe that the type of houses that we will build at Hoytes Village would be more in keeping with the new trends. So far a number of residents have said that the starter houses seem to be too small and we would try to improve on the size that we are giving at present although I must say that the starter houses have been in demand. Even though people say that they are a bit small all the houses that we have built so far have been sold and the ones that we have built abutting and bounding this existing village have all been sold. The demand for the land at Hoytes is very great. We envisage that we will have no problem at all in this development.

We envisage that this development will go quite quickly. I expect that the plans for Hoytes Village should be completed within the next two or three months. It will go to tender and we will do a joint venture at this site as well.

I believe that within time the entire areas of Hoytes Village, of Husbards, of Oxnards and of Durants Village – Government has bought a lot of land in these areas – we can do more housing since the demand is great for these areas.

With those remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Resolution is in keeping with the parliamentary process. The surveyor plans are available for members to examine. The Attorney-General has certified it to be in order. I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is rather interesting that the Honourable Member for St. George North would have acknowledged that the size of the houses previously built by the Government was not suitable. I welcome the assurance to this House that this Ministry will be improving on the size of the houses that they will be building.

As you are aware, Sir, I have said in this House that anytime in the 21st Century you can get a house smaller than a house provided to the slaves by the slave masters that this could not be a country that can be called progressive. I am very glad to recognise that the Minister of Housing, after being prompted by certain Members of Cabinet, has decided that the size of the particular house that is being offered to the masses of people of Barbados is not appropriate.

I have no doubt, Sir, that the Honourable Member for St. Michael East had a hand in that particular charge on the Minister of Housing. I could not see how anyone who champions the cause or claims that he is championing the cause of the masses would allow a Minister of Housing to build two by two houses or if you want to multiply it by ten and call it the 20 x 20 houses. That would be appropriate.

The excuse that is being used in this country is that even though the houses are small they are being sold. It tells you, Sir, that in the twenty-first century the Barbadian public is so starved for housing that it is prepared to accept from Government things that are substandard and one would understand what would have happened if proper houses were provided.

This Government must recognise that housing has to be one of the key factors for its people. If you want people to improve their productivity then they must be able to rest properly at night. No wonder that certain people are complaining that the productivity of Barbadians is not what they knew previously. It shows that Barbadians are under housing stress, which you can easily put on the back of the Government of Barbados.

Sir, I welcome the news that the Honourable Member for St. George North and the Cabinet has accepted another suggestion from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. If they continue to listen to this Side then they would not be under the stress which they are under from the masses of people in this country. I also would like the Honourable Member for St. George North...
2.40 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Imagine, we only have two Members and we can cause them to reverse all their housing plans. Can you imagine what would happen if we had more than two members. I have already warned this House not to interrupt me when I am on my feet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also welcome the day when the Cabinet of Barbados will recognise that the people of St. Lucy are also entitled to housing lots. Sir, we are not asking for houses, we are asking for land to build our own houses. I cannot understand how Government can have a constituency that is asking for land to build houses and they continue to starve that particular constituency when the people are prepared to find the necessary finances to build their own houses. If the Government does not know how to approach the Arawak Cement Plant to get a project between the Arawak Cement Plant and the National Housing Corporation we are quite prepared to put a plan before the Arawak Cement Plant so that houses could be built at a reduced cost.

Sir, up to 1994 when we left Government we were building stone structures in this country. A good example of that would have been at Cane Garden in St. Thomas and Husbands in St. James.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: We left stone structures there and in this year 2000 to 2001, I am hearing Government talking about wooden structures. This country's housing policy is going backwards, not forward, Sir, and it is happening at a time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we have the Arawak Cement Plant providing concrete to help build roads but yet we want to import materials from overseas instead of entering a relation with the Arawak Cement Plant to provide concrete to help stone structures.

We have to deal with the effects of globalisation and the drain of foreign exchange that globalisation would have on Barbados, therefore, we would have to recognise that it is better to build a base with the Arawak Cement Plant to help reduce imports and have some stone structures developed for the masses of people in this country instead of having to import lumber *etcetera*.

Sir, again, this will be introduced a year or two from now when Government thinks that everybody has forgotten that the idea came from the Democratic Labour Party as they have done with the sizes of the houses. I must admit that the Honourable Member next to the Minister of Housing is quite different. Whenever he sees an idea that is good, he runs with it, like the concrete roads and the new policy where he will be allocating roads to every constituency. It is a very good policy but the only regrettable thing is that he did not recognise the idea came from the Democratic Labour Party when we argued that there was need for local government, that all we need to do is allocate the resources in the correct proportions among constituencies.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: This is the year 2000, not the year 1976. These forward thinking ideas must come in the year 2000. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that even though we welcome the new ideas about housing from the Minister of Housing that he must recognise that his Ministry can contribute a lot more to this country if they provide more housing lots for people to build houses. Instead of using the money to build houses to enrich the wrong people, he should provide the housing lots and allow people to build houses.

Sir, I can assure you that if the Government built 10 000 houses and they were to provide 30 000 housing lots in Barbados they will get 30 000 houses. Again, you can only expect this type of idea to come from this Side. We hope that the Government would listen and bring this idea two years from now because they do not want anybody to know that the ideas have been coming from the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one would expect that with these ideas being given to the Government, they cannot tell Barbadians any longer that they do not know how to

Village Development on the verge of taking place consequent to this acquisition which is before the House today.

This project has been a very useful one because even though the constituency of St. James South is the most heavily populated in the country, we still have the very good fortune of having enough land left to have the new housing development go on stream – housing developments in every category whether they are to cater to lower income grouping, starter homes or middle income house.

A lot of people are still attempting to move into the constituency of St. James South because it is relatively central, fairly close to Bridgetown and has excellent access to sights, services, major highways and all the amenities, so it remains a highly desirable place to live. Therefore, it is incumbent, in my view, on this administration that we continue to put more housing developments into this constituency which still has the land space to carry these developments.

The demand for housing for Barbadians and several people who live within the constituencies who are renting and hoping to own their own home or who live in family situations and want to get out and set up on their own, that demand is extremely high. It is extremely high because of the number of people who are working, saving money and have disposable income that they can invest in their own piece of the rock. It is high, also, because with the coming on stream of the Government's 100% mortgage policy, it means that there are a number of people who previously would not have had access to housing who now have.

In my view, the Government needs to use some moral suasion, however, to get the private banking sector to have a part of their mortgage portfolio allocated to the facility of 100% mortgage. As far as I am aware 100% mortgages are still being carried by Barbados Mortgage Finance Company Limited, which is a Government institution. I know that Clico does 100% mortgages. There is a need for the private banking sector to invest in Barbadians by allowing them the facility of the 100% mortgage.

Most people do live from pay cheque to pay cheque. Therefore, a lot of people would find great difficulty in accumulating the 10%, 25% or 30% deposit, plus all the legal fees and other ongoing consequents of a purchase to put aside that amount in order to make a purchase of a property.

However, if they have the facility of the 100% mortgage, they would be able to meet the monthly repayment without any difficulty but they cannot manage to save that lump sum that they need to do the investment in a property. It is critical if we are to house the nation, Barbados, that the

100% mortgage takes root in the private finance institution. It is by that means that more Barbadians will be able to own their own homes. They will be able to buy their piece of the rock.

There is nothing that fills people more with a sense of pride than the day that they turn their key in their first property. The first time that they walk into a house that they call their own and is acquired by the sweat of your brow and you know that you have the responsibility for keeping that shelter over your head. It transforms irresponsible people into people with tremendous sense of responsibility because they now have a live object, a goal, in terms of keeping and maintaining that property.

I think that it is critical that the Government uses its moral suasion to get the private banking sector to take on board the 100% mortgage in a way that they have not up to now. It is proving extremely popular and as far as I can tell from those institutions that extended the facility to the public there is no higher degree of default of payment amongst people who have 100% mortgage than amongst those who have 70% or 80% mortgages. If they are prepared to pay in the same way as persons who have a limited mortgage, then there is absolutely no reason for the banks to regard them as a higher risk or bad risk.

Indeed, this is part of the way in which Government will get the opportunity to have its land bank utilised. It is my understanding that the Government has now acquired something in the order of 500 acres of land. Since we are not a nomadic people, we cannot live on the land just so, government needs, therefore, to find creative solutions for getting houses on that land otherwise the Government's housing policy will be frustrated.

We have an objective in relation to the number of houses that we want to build over this term of our administration. If that objective is to be achieved, the Ministry of Housing does not have the capacity to deliver on the quantity of houses that we need to build, *vis à vis* the demand and the need for housing and *vis à vis* the amount of land available to build houses on. The Ministry of Housing does not have the capability to build houses on 500 acres. It just does not have the capability to do that. Therefore, we have to encourage the private sector to extend 100% mortgages so that more people can get homes constructed.

In addition, I heard the Honourable Minister say the words "joint venture." He did not elaborate on it but it seems to me that the time has come if we are to move land bank to a housing pool, which is what people need. To say that we have a fabulous land bank and we have 500 acres, those numbers are impressive but do not deal with the need of the individual for a house. We have to move, Mr. Minister, from land banks to housing banks. If you are speaking of joint ventures, I am of the view, that is the way to go.

I have wondered for some time, why it is that Government either does not go out to tender or does not invite expressions of interest, or does not meet with contractors. Not the large contractors who are doing the multi million dollar projects but meet with small and mid-size contractors who do high quality work and have the capacity for doing good work and who have need of work. They must meet with small and medium sized contractors who do good work, who have the capacity for doing good work, and who have need of work, because while there is a building boom in Barbados, the reality is that there are still a lot of builders out there who are waiting for their next house to come along, or their next repair job, or their next refurbishment and while they are kept in work continuously, the reality is that they could find the pool, if given the opportunity, to bill government for houses in this sort of situation.

3.00 p.m.

I believe the time has therefore come when we should make the pool available. We should invite small and mid-size contractors, let them amalgamate with one another. A lot of these small builders are black and as a people, for many years we have had an aversion to working with one another. We have to get beyond that the same way that big businesses of different ethnic background do. The Indians do it all the time, pool their resources to go after a particular objective.

Similarly, small contractors and small black contractors – and there might be small Indians and small white ones too – could get together and form groups to bid on particular parcels of land. Let the Government choose which areas they want to see developed and/or developed quickly. They must invite people to make expressions of interest and let the contractors get together and build the housing development. I do not know if Government might want to say “we are making it available free, this is our investment, and therefore, your responsibility would be to control the ultimate cost of the finished product.” In other words, they cannot sell any house beyond “X” dollars because Government is putting up the land.

Alternatively, let them have the land at concessionary rate, or let them pay government for the land at the end of the construction project, but give them letters so that they can go to a finance institution and show that they have an opportunity to do projects in which the Government is investing and making land available to them.

That way, not only will we be moving these small businessmen to opportunities to have bigger businesses and greater and professional growth, but simultaneously, all over Barbados we will be creating a lot of new housing projects that we could not, otherwise, have created had we waited on the Ministry of Housing and Lands.

We talked about the difficulty of getting asphalt from the two companies, COW Williams Construction Company and Rayside Concrete Works. If there were opportunities available like this, somebody else or some group of people may get together and say that they can set up a competing business and with globalisation, that is what is going to happen. Market forces and market demand will create greater opportunities for other people to invest, but Government has a responsibility to create the opportunities and avenues for investment and growth by small business people and small contractors, and similarly, we have a responsibility to ensure that we house a nation.

Let us admit, not everybody wants to get a custom-designed house. I, being a professional woman, bought a house that was ready-built, because I wanted a turn-key operation. I did not want to be getting into discussion with the contractor about this and that and choosing tiles, *et cetera*.

Asides.

Miss H. E. THOMPSON: C.I.B.C. did it? I am not aware that C.I.B.C. did it, but I am advised by the Honourable Member for St. Michael East that C.I.B.C. did it. There are three or four basic housing designs to choose from and you have to make sure that there is enough room for landscaping and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have visited every house in the new Hoytes Village Development, except two, where the residents had not moved in yet, but I left my call card so that they will know that their Member of Parliament representative was visiting and to welcome them to the new development in the constituency. But, people are very, very pleased with the quality of housing and there were no complaints about the size of the rooms.

I would wish to compliment the Ministry of Housing, because I did ask residents if they were satisfied and they indicated that they were. I would hope that the same kind of diligence which was applied in the first phase will also apply in the second. I would wish to put the Minister on notice that I have a long list of constituents who are interested in moving over there, so I am sure that they are going to be sending in their application in due course, but some have already come in.

I would wish to return, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to a point that I have made repeatedly in this House. I firmly believe that if we are going to be building housing projects, where we are targeting first-time homeowners and persons who are in their productive years, then we are under a responsibility to ensure that when we build these housing developments adequate green and recreational spaces go into the facilities. Far too often we build a mass of concrete. We have to

include the compulsory green space that Town and Country Planning sets out, a space that is not just left open and green, but one that is landscaped and includes some kind of recreational space and facility, so that residents do not have to feel alienated in their neighbourhood, but could get together on evenings on the park benches, under a tree, where children can run around and play and have a sense of community spirit, rather than a sense of a mass of concrete going up without such facilities.

At Hoytes Village, prior to the houses being built there had been an existing cricket field where the fellows used to say that it was the only cricket field in Barbados, where you had to change under a tree across the street and cross the road when it was time to play cricket.

There was, then a commitment from the then Minister of Housing and Lands that a pavilion would be built because a large housing development was now coming to the area. That pavilion would be built which would have proper changing facility and enough space for volley ball and other sports to be played.
3.05 p.m.

Sir, I am today renewing my call for the construction of that facility. There is tremendous demand for recreational facilities from young people in Barbados. St. James South is the most popular constituency in the island, geographically, it may not be the largest but in terms of the demographic distribution, it is the largest.

There are young people of varying ages and we need to have proper facilities for the outlet of their creative energies. St. James South has proven to be a constituency out of which all kinds of sports people have come. Obadele Thompson's church is in St. James South. Desmond Haynes, Philo Wallace are from St. James South and I could go on to call cricketers who have played at the regional level, the national level and the international level. I could go on to say that the volleyball team that had so many successes recently had three players from St. James South. I could also go on to say that the football team that has been doing extremely well at a national level has members from St. James South. This is a sporting constituency and it is the mechanism that several people in the constituency have used to pull themselves out of poverty, to bring honour to their community and to bring honour to the country. If in fact we are to nurture those creative energies and talents, then we must make sure that these young people have proper facilities from the outset.

We are not truly being developmental if we just build houses without proper infrastructural development and without development and recreational facilities. We must go the extra step and find the resources to do these developments, comprehensively.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not share the views...

Asides.

Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, I do not share the views of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. I think that in Barbados the chattel house has been a traditional mode of housing and there are those persons who do not mind chattel houses. There are those persons who want wall houses and there are those who are prepared to have a chattel house as a starter home and then move to something else.

There is a scope for chattel houses in Barbados so there is nothing wrong with having chattel house developments because you can build beautiful chattel houses. I have gone into chattel houses that are extremely well outfitted, lacked for nothing and have the most beautiful verandahs and all the beautiful wood furnishings and wood work that only very skilled joiners can do. That ginger bread work and the fret work and so on for which houses in the Caribbean are now internationally famous. When you go to islands like Bequia and Mustique, you see what has come to be known as the detailing of these wooden houses and it is a delight to see it.

What we should do, is not just build square boxes for chattel houses but draw on the finest tradition of Barbadian craftsmanship and build chattel houses that are beautiful, with exceptional joinery and wonderful detail so that they become something to see and that people want to come into chattel house villages and maintain them and look at them so that the chattel house becomes the pride of what is the historical mode of housing and that we exhibit it at the highest possible quality. I do not object at all to a chattel house.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a matter of fact, if I could find a piece of land anywhere in St. Joseph or St. Andrew that gives a good view and some good breezes, they can take my wall house in Prior Park because I can build a chattel house down there and move down.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be glad to entertain my colleagues with the wonderful breezes off of the east coast but somebody would have to find me the piece of land at the price that I could afford. I think what is the greatest challenge is to ensure that whatever kind of house we build, whether it is the starter homes – and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy spoke to the size of the wall homes...

Asides.

Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I have seen in my constituency several starter house developments where people started with the basic starter homes and over time, I said in this house already, those starter homes became palatial residences. They extended them, they improved on

the size of the bedroom, they built a second storey, they added on beautiful verandahs so people used those as the basic and when they 'catch their hand', to use a good old time Bajan expression, they then improved on these houses, so I do not see anything wrong with giving people a basic starter home to give them a start up in life, there is absolutely nothing wrong with that.

Sir, what we have to ensure is that the cost of housing is affordable because some of the prices that I hear starter houses being sold at, are really extremely high. People describe these sometimes as low income houses but these are not low income premises. If we are to really meet the housing demand, part of the challenge that the Government faces, in my view, is to ensure that the cost of housing remains affordable and within the grasp of the average Barbadian.

Land prices has skyrocketed and for a basic piece of land, people will look you straight in your face and tell you that they are asking \$15 per square foot for the land. I was stunned to find that a piece of land close to where I have a building was recently selling at \$44 a square foot. I was totally amazed that they were asking that much and this is not in any posh area that they were asking \$44 a square foot. My face immediately lit up because that then told me what I could get for my property. The difficulty is that as a Government, this spiraling land cost is something we have to watch.

Sir, if you are attempting to build a first time property and you cannot get a piece of land under \$10 per square foot, immediately you are starting with a very high cost. If you want to pay off for the land, or pay off a substantial part of the cost of the land before you put up your house, then it means you are going to be paying for that land for a long time before you can afford to put up the house. In the mean time building costs are also climbing so we have to look at a way of containing the cost of land, especially the cost of land for starter homes and for low income housing.

In my view, I made the suggestion earlier that the Government might wish to consider, whether or not we would give the land as part of an investment, or certainly give it at very, very low cost but that the Government itself, would not be in the business of selling lots at \$10, \$12 and \$15 per square foot for starter homes where the development is a large middle-income or upper middle-income development like the one being done at Husbands Heights in my own constituency and that is another matter. Where we are coming to the starter homes and the low income houses, we have to find a way of containing those land costs.

Let me thank the Honourable Member for St. George North for the Resolution before the House today. I am very pleased to see continued growth of my constituency and greater opportunities for housing being made but I would

wish to ask the Honourable Member, respectfully, to take on board some of the suggestions I have made in terms of the Government using moral suasion to ensure that 100 per cent mortgages are made available by private banking institutions in Barbados, that we try to contain the cost of land in respect of starter homes and that we get the pavilion and the sporting facility at Hoytes Terrace to go with the very large housing development.

Asides.

Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, most of all, that we find a way of investing in small and mid-size contractors so as to facilitate the Government's housing project.

Sir, nobody can sleep on a land bank. What we want is a housing bank and we must now make the step from the land bank to the housing bank and it seems to me that the Government needs to find new and creative ways of accomplishing that.

I am much obliged to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am indeed grateful for the suggestions made by the two Honourable Members who spoke on this Resolution before the House.

I am grateful first of all, to the Honourable Member for St. James South for her idea of creating a housing bank. I must say to the Honourable Member that it is quite easy for us to really create a land bank. However, it is very difficult to develop a house bank, Sir, because of the demand for housing, as soon as a house is available on the market, it is taken up immediately but we would try our best and create more opportunities.
3.20 p.m.

I know there is a demand for housing and we will provide opportunities as best as we can. I must say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is asking us to create more lots. I know there is a demand for lots but throughout Barbados, we have a situation where there are many lots that have been approved by the Town and Country Planning Department but many of these lots are already bought but they are not developed with houses.

There are a number of cases, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where persons have bought the land but then they still ask you for the housing solution. People will buy a spot but then they will come to the National Housing Corporation and say that they want a house and we have a number of cases like that.

We have encouraged a number of people to buy house spots and get into the community programme where they will

have their neighbour's help – the old community spirit. This happens sometimes but in most cases nowadays because of the job situation where employment is so high, people do not necessarily have time on weekends now to do that service that they used to do in years gone by.

I believe that we will create more lots, in fact, next year we have plans for more than 2 000 solutions. We have already received permission from the Town Planner for a number of lots and we would hope to provide these things.

In terms of more houses, the study from Deanes Town has now been completed and we are hoping to analyse the study and move on Deanes Town. That is part of the Government's housing programme for next year. We have acquired a number of parcels of land in various constituencies but some of them will have to be finalised.

I want to remind Honourable Members that the acquisition process takes time. We have visited lands and areas in various constituencies but the surveying work takes some time, the legal work takes time, it goes to Cabinet and then it comes to Parliament, so it takes a little time but we are hoping that we could move forward on some of those proposals in the next calendar year.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy asked about Mount Poyer. From all reports there are about 22 lots at Mount Poyer, St. Lucy. The average lot size is about 5 000 square feet and preliminary planning work has been completed. I understand the profiles to date have been almost completed as well. The work – roads and drainage – will start in January 2001 in St. Lucy.

With those remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday, November 28, 2000 at 11.00 a.m.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.
3.25 p.m.

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